

Sarisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 9TH APRIL 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! I've gone with the newsletter format again; I hope you like it. As before, comments, improvements, suggestions welcome!

Online singing opportunities

I hope that some of you have been able to enjoy the great singing opportunities to sing together online during this unusual time. I do encourage you to make use of some or all of them if you can!

I don't know you if any of you got involved with the "stay and sing" organised by choral conductor Hilary Campbell last Saturday afternoon. It certainly looks as though it was successful, as Hilary is running another one, this time on two of the Coronation Anthems by Handel (Zadok the Priest and Let thy hand be strengthened). This next event is on Saturday 18th April, 2pm - 4:15pm. Further details here:

<https://www.hilarycampbell.com/stay-and-sing>

Two weeks ago, I sent you (via Ann) the information from Choraline about "Messiah at home". Further details and a dedicated website have been set up here:

<https://www.theselfisolationchoir.com>

The person behind the project is professional singer choral conductor Ben England. You will, I am sure be interested in having a look at his "Quarantine Choir" YouTube channel. I personally enjoyed dipping in to the one where he was rehearsing "Jesu, Joy of man's desiring":

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2pDlj_r7ho3iPDvOLwgsbg

I should probably point out at this stage, that none of the people that I don't personally know any of the people who are running these sessions, this is just a result of doing some research on your behalf!

Singing regularly

I've said it before and I'll say it again, our singing voices are like musical instruments which need regular practice in order to get the most out of our voices. If you're not able to join in with the online opportunities mentioned, you can keep on singing just by doing warm up exercises!

More from Roger Hale again this week, his previous videos have been aimed at choir warm up activities, but here's one specifically for individual singers which I think you'll find helpful:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0lHK6VZR38>

More from the acclaimed vocal group Voces8 who, in collaboration with vocal group Apollo 5, are uploading a daily video on a variety of singing subjects. Last Friday's video was an interactive song, which serves as both a good warm up and a short singing activity (the video is just under eight minutes long):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9xDt4oduYE>

This video was recorded before social distancing was a larger consideration!

Puccini Requiem

Last week, I introduced you to this very unique setting of the Requiem which was composed to commemorate the first anniversary of Rossini's death. This work was a collaboration between 13 Italian composers and

was initiated by Verdi, who proposed the idea four days after the death of Rossini.

This week, I would like to introduce you to a setting of the Requiem by the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini (born in 1858 and died in 1924).

This short Requiem (six minutes in duration) was commissioned by Verdi's old publisher Ricordi, who wanted to mark the fourth anniversary of the death of Verdi (27th January 1905) by celebrating the memory of the "King of 19th century Italian opera" with a work composed by his successor on the opera stages of the world.

The work was completed on 14th January 1905 and received its premiere on 27th January 1905 by the choir of La Scala in the Cappella della Casa di riposo "Giuseppe Verdi" which was a charitable institution founded by Verdi himself.

Unlike Verdi's setting of the Requiem, Puccini calls for very small forces; choir, organ and solo viola.

A particular feature of this work is the opening and closing section, sung by the choir in unison. Here, Puccini is taking his inspiration from an unusual musical scale known as the "scala enigmatica (enigmatic scale)".

This scale is the basis of Verdi's setting of the Ave Maria which is one of his four sacred pieces.



The scale had been published in Ricordi's magazine *Gazetta musicale di Milano*, inviting composers to harmonise it; so a sort of musical challenge!

The musical editor of my Puccini vocal score, Michele Girardi states that:

"given the limits imposed by the shortness of the piece and by the

occasion for which it was written, this Requiem is a deeply felt homage offered by Puccini to his predecessor Giuseppe Verdi, in which the viola, as if in a short scene from an opera, arouses sympathy and compassion for the one who has left this world behind".

Have a listen to the piece and see what you think!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TTNyrftOAE>

Hallelujah!

Thank you to the one singer (at the time of writing) who participated in the Easter challenge. As I've only (at 1pm) had one recording, I won't be putting together a full recording at the moment!

Although I asked for recordings by today (Thursday 9th), I will gladly receive recordings if you still want to have a go. Please send them to graydkidd@gmail.com

On a personal note

I'm sorry that we are not able to meet together at the moment. I have been asked about virtual choir rehearsals. I have read stories of varying success of these; and to be honest the evidence doesn't convince me that it would be a very productive exercise. The main problem is that there appears to be a big time delay, making singing together incredibly hard! I hope that my weekly bulletin with singing links are helping to ensure some continuity. I have no doubt that this is already happening, but do please keep in touch with the choir via Eileen and with each other as much as you can. Our section reps and committee are here to support you. If you're keen to do some distancing singing with other SCS members, then see if you can set up your own smaller project via Zoom or Google.

I have decided to have a week off from work next week, so the next newsletter will be published on Thursday 23rd April.

In the meantime, take care and stay safe.

Graham